

Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi Says the Coast of California is Now Up for Sale to Big Oil

SACRAMENTO - Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, the chair of the State Lands Commission, issued the following statement on the May Revise proposal to sell PXP, the Tranquillion Ridge oil lease, for \$100 million.

"The oil company has essentially offered to loan \$100 million dollars to California in exchange for granting the first new oil drilling lease in California since the Santa Barbara oil spill 41 years ago. Furthermore the \$100 million loan must be repaid by forgiving future royalty payments to the state," Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi said. "This is a clear signal to the federal administration that California is willing to issue new oil drilling leases off the California coast opening the door for the federal government to drill baby drill by also issuing new oil drilling leases. California should be a leader in renewable energy production, not a producer of a polluting product best left in the 20th century."

Background from January 29, 2009 State Lands Commission meeting

On a two-to-one vote in January, the State Lands Commission denied the first new oil lease in state waters in almost 40 years.

Garamendi, former Deputy Interior Secretary under President Bill Clinton, argued strongly that the plan would signal that California wants to open offshore drilling and supporters would push for more oil exploration on the West Coast.

"I refuse to let this lease move forward," Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi said. "Approving a drilling proposal will undercut congressional efforts to reintroduce a federal moratorium on offshore oil drilling earlier lifted by the Bush Administration."

The Lieutenant Governor chairs the three-member State Lands Commission, which considered the request to lease land to the Plains Exploration & Production Company to expand drilling off the coast of California.

The Lieutenant Governor had earlier talked to members of the California congressional delegation who had significant concerns about the lease undercutting their attempts to reintroduce a federal moratorium on oil exploration off the coast.

The State Lands Commission's staff last week recommended voting down the lease, because there were no sound guarantees that the company would have to shut down the plan.

An archived video and agenda of the meeting is available here: <http://www.cal-span.org/cgi-bin/archive.php?owner=CSLC&date=2009-01-29>

Lieutenant Governor Garamendi has an accomplished environmental record:

- As chairman, Garamendi led the State Lands Commission to reject the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal off the Oxnard/Malibu coast, highlighting the plan's deficiencies in protecting the environmental health of the communities, the ocean and coastline.
- As a member of the Ocean Protection Council, Garamendi developed a plan & championed legislation (Pacific Protection Initiative; 5 marine debris bills to reduce ocean pollution) to greatly decrease pollution of California beaches from plastic refuse, reducing the danger to California's beaches and marine life.
- As Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Garamendi oversaw the Department's eight bureaus and helped develop national global warming policy with Vice President Al Gore and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. He also was the key negotiator for water disputes throughout California and brought the Riverside Habitat Conservation Plan to successful implementation, which protected 66,000 acres of rare habitat. It is a national model.
- As a California legislator, Garamendi authored the Tahoe Bond Act (1982), allowing the State to acquire and preserve private land in the Tahoe Basin. Since then, he has continued to help lead the state's efforts to protect the quality and clarity of Lake Tahoe's water, shore zone, natural habitat, and regional development activities.
- Garamendi's 32 years of public service and environmental leadership was recently recognized by leading California coastal advocates:
 - Environmental Defense Center (Environmental Hero Award, June 2008)
 - San Diego Coast Keeper (2007 Coastal Champion Award, November 2007)
 - The California Coastal Coalition & the Wetlands Recovery Project (2007 Friend of the Coast Award, April 2007)